

Management of Sage Grouse on the Yakima Training Center



General Information:

The Yakima Training Center supports one of the two remaining populations of Western Sage Grouse in the state of Washington. Due to declining populations and significant reductions in suitable habitat, the Columbia Basin distinct population segment of the Western Sage Grouse has been designated a State Threatened Species and is now a candidate for Federal listing as Threatened under the Endangered Species Act. The Yakima Training Center has specifically managed for this species and its habitat for over ten years.

Data Collection and Evaluation:

Since 1989 YTC has undertaken various studies to evaluate sage grouse and their habitat on the installation. These studies include:

- Radio telemetry studies to evaluate nesting and brood rearing success,

causes of mortality, year round habitat selection, and changes in habitat use patterns over time.

- Impact analysis to evaluate the impact of military training on sage grouse and their habitat.
- Development of a spatially based Habitat Suitability Index for Sage Grouse on YTC.
- Lek monitoring and searches to determine population trends and species distribution on the installation.

Protection Measures:

A 45,500 acre sage grouse protection area comprises a large portion of the habitat used by sage grouse on the installation. Within this protection area spatial and temporal protection measures are in place to protect the bird from disturbance and to prevent long term impacts to habitat.

- All active leks are protected throughout the breeding season and are off limits to training activities while occupied by sage grouse.
- Nesting habitat is off limits to training activities through the nesting season to minimize impacts to sage grouse during this critical period.
- Habitat is protected by limiting the kind of training activities allowed to occur in the protection area as well as the frequency and intensity of these activities.
- YTC has developed and implemented an aggressive Installation Fire Management Plan.
- Livestock grazing does not occur on YTC and springs and riparian areas are protected by Siber Staking.

- Public viewing is strictly controlled by installation staff.

Management Activities and Restoration:

- YTC has developed and implemented a Sage Grouse Management Plan that was reviewed and approved by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
- YTC participates in the Washington Sage Grouse Working Group.
- YTC is involved in a cooperative project with the Yakama Nation to evaluate shrub-steppe habitat on the Yakama Nation leading to the potential re-introduction of sage grouse.
- YTC plants 300,000 sagebrush seedlings, 5,000 riparian shrubs and sows 1,500 lbs. of sagebrush seed and 275 lbs. of native grass and forb seed annually.



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